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February 25, 2008

Travel Management Planning Team
Bitterroot National Forest
88 Main
Stevensville, MT 59870

FEB 29 2008
Ravalli County Commissioners

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There are still many issues I feel compelled to write about the Bitterroot NF Proposed Travel Management Plan.

Nothing in this travel plan process has convinced me that it was necessary for the Bitterroot NF to feel compelled to develop a new travel plan. You refer to it as a travel plan yet it provides a negative impact on the multi-users of our Public Lands and restricts travel. Your staff has repeatedly said your purpose is to develop a travel plan to balance motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities while protecting the forest's natural resources. Forty Seven percent of the Bitterroot NF is already wilderness. Wheeled motorized access is normally limited to trails and roads. Is there really a problem leaving the trails and roads open in 47% of the Forest? It appears to me use of the Forest is already balanced. You could save thousands of dollars by just stating the current travel plan is balanced. All types of recreation activities occur on motorized trails, so all money spent on their maintenance benefits everyone, instead of a few. As a senior citizen, I enjoy motorized recreation, berry-picking, wood gathering, and hunting and I should have access to the public lands. Your travel plan is discriminatory and locks out access for seniors and disabled people. Proposing closures on multiple use trails will concentrate use, increase impacts, and reduce user satisfactions.

Regarding the winter travel plan, snowmobiling is a sport that is beneficial both mentally and physically – great fun – provides awesome scenery, and leaves less impact on our forest resources than any other recreational activity, including hiking. Snowmobilers want access to the high alpine areas where the views are awesome, few animals exist, most non-motorized users can not reach and resource damage and conflict is essentially non-existent. Snowmobiling at lower elevations is more hazardous due to stumps, rocks etc because of limited snowfall. You have not provided any substantial evidence that snowmobiling should be prohibited in the high alpine areas from December 1 through April 30th. High elevation areas should be left open to snowmobiling.

The Montana Title and Registration Bureau provided registered vehicle statistics for Ravalli County as follows:

Year	Off Highway Vehicles	Snowmobiles
2007	2416	1622
2006	2218	1489
2005	1995	1360
2004	1648	1119
2003	1621	776

Based on the fast growing use of recreational vehicles you should be developing areas specifically for motorized recreational use rather than closing even one mile of road or trails. With nearly 50% of the Forest already wilderness and with the increasing number of registered vehicles, there should be as many alternatives providing more access as alternatives locking the public out of public access.

On November 19, 2007 I submitted a letter where I addressed that the Proposed Travel Management Plan document had skewed data including deceptive graphic charts. You promised three, but held one public meeting where people were able to speak and listeners were able to learn or disagree. I am very disappointed that additional public meetings and sharing of information among the people did not occur. You allowed individuals and small groups to meet with Forest Service staff but you denied public informational sharing meetings. During this public comment period I have learned that you have a specific agenda you plan to accomplish so you are not allowing the public to be "informed" about the long term effects of this proposed document. This is unfair! It appears you have changed your name for Forest Service to Forest Politics.

I would like to offer a few suggestions on how to achieve a travel plan that would be balanced between motorized and non-motorized recreational groups while protecting the forest's natural resources.

1. Be honest with the public, and don't present skewed information.
2. Weight comments received during this comment period. People's comments from zip codes within the Bitterroot Valley should receive higher consideration.
3. Utilize wisdom – develop a Travel Plan that would be pleasing to our Creator who developed this earth for varied multi-users and who loves each of us for our varied backgrounds and abilities.
4. Teach us to be stewards of this public land. There are groups who are anxious to work with you in being stewards of the public lands and in adopting trails for maintenance purposes.
5. With 47% of the Forest already being wilderness remember that you do not need any more proposed wilderness to obtain a balance.
6. Let Congress manage wilderness instead of creating "proposed" wilderness areas for the Forest Service to manage. It seems a "balanced" Travel Plan would not set aside more than 47% of the Forest as wilderness.
7. As stated above, develop and present to the public as many alternatives providing more access as you have alternatives locking the public out of their public lands.

Thank You,

Sincerely,

Betty Frost, 220 Camas Creek Loop, Hamilton, MT 59840

Cc: -Representative, Dennis Rehberg, dustin.frost@mail.house.gov
-Treasure State Alliance, MtSnowman@snowtana.com
-MSA, rondawigggers@bresnan.net
-Citizens for Balanced Use, Autodoc@theglobal.net
-Senator, Max Baucus, 1821 S. Ave. W., Missoula, MT 59801
-Senator, Jon Tester, 116 W. Front St., Missoula, MT 59802
-Blue Ribbon Coalition, Mr. Hawthorne, 4555 Burley Dr, Suite A, Pocatello, ID 83202
-Ravalli County Commissioners